

10 Steps to Federal Employment

According to the Student's Federal Career Guide by Kathryn and Emily Troutman (available in the OCS library), there are 10 to finding and winning government jobs and internships:

1. Network

Use and develop your connections to see if you know anyone who works in the government system. Use these connections to learn more about the federal employment and the hiring process.

2. Find Your Agency

Discover the area of federal employment that is right for you. Again, refer to the major to career link to discover what some potential areas that might particularly interest you.

3. Internships

The federal government offers many opportunities for students through internships. These internships vary between paid and unpaid. A key thing to remember is that "a federal internship can be your ticket to a federal career." (Troutman and Troutman, 24).

4. Understanding Federal Jobs: Target Your Grade and Salary

Another way to narrow down the search in the immense amount of federal employment arena, is to target your grade level and therefore your salary level (a GS level). This ranges from a GS-2 level all the way to a GS-15. Most graduating college students would be considered a GS-5. However, if you graduated with honors or a GPA of a 3.0 or better, you would qualify for the superior academic performance and be able to raise yourself to a GS-7.

5. Finding Vacancy Announcements for Federal Jobs and Internships

Using online databases is the best way to search for federal employment. Nearly all government jobs now must be applied for online.

www.usajobs.opm.gov

www.avuecentral.com

www.fedjobs.com (fee required)

www.federaljobsearch.com (fee required)

6. Writing Your Federal and Electronic Resume

Your federal resume is going to be quite different from your regular resume. For instance, it is not constrained to a 1-2 page restriction. Instead, the federal resume should include all information, not just the relative experience, so do not worry about length limitations. Also, every page of a federal resume should include your name and social security number. A social security number MUST be included in your federal resume.

7. Write KSA's and Cover Letters

Another unique feature of government employment is their inclusion of a section known as KSA's. KSA stands for Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities. This is one of the most important sections on your federal resume and in the application process. This is the section of the federal resume that the government usually refers to in order to weed out some applicants whose KSA's do not match the job objectives.

The KSA section of your resume or application should be two-thirds of a page to one page in length and should include at least two or three detailed responsibilities of your KSA's. At the GS-5 to GS-7 level (college graduates) three to five KSA's is generally required. This section should be written in the first person, emphasizing your personal strengths.

It is important in your KSA section, to emphasize knowledge, skills, and abilities that pertain directly to the job you are applying for. If your KSA's match the job objective, it is more likely that you will advance in the selection process. An important skill for most government jobs is in the area of communication, therefore it may be a step up to include a KSA about communication skills or abilities. An example of this would be:

Ability to communicate effectively with team members.

OR

Skilled in written and oral communication.

Also, try to elaborate on these vague KSA's by making them more specific through personal experience. For example:

Skilled in written and oral communication. (Good)

Skilled in written and oral communication through (1) orally presenting my research project at the Bluffton College University Psychology Conference, (2) filling out detailed written instructions to my team members at Pro Tech. (Better)

Also, another method for filling out the KSA section is to follow the CARC model. This stands for Context, Action, Results, Challenges. The CARC method offers a specific path to follow when answering the KSA's. When describing your KSA be sure to include the Context (where this KSA occurred), the physical Action of what your KSA is in a thorough and detailed description, the Results of what occurred after you completed your KSA, and finally the Challenge or pressure that the situation the KSA occurred in. By following this method you are able to create a more detailed response rather than a vague KSA. These more detailed responses are more likely to be noticed by those reviewing the resumes.

8. Apply for Federal Jobs

9. Track and Follow-Up Applications

10. Interview for a Federal Job

For more information on federal jobs or where to fill out an application, please visit these sites:

www.makingthedifference.org

www.usajobs.gov